LOOBIECORE FOREVER

(My interview with Lou Barlow)

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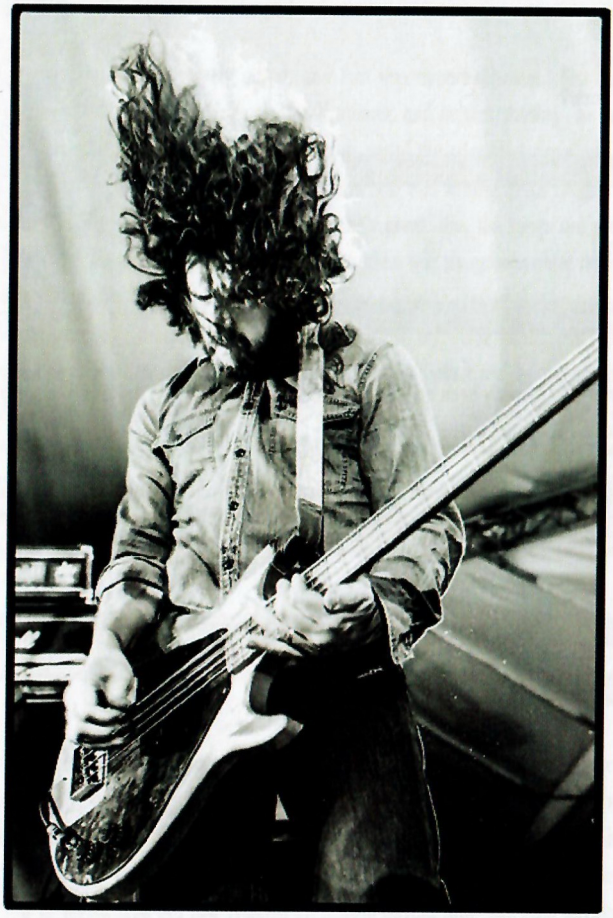


PLUS: Celebrating Kurt Cobain's 59th Birthday

Lou Barlow

Interview Date: January 13, 2026

Today is January 13, 2026, this is Washing Machine Music interview number two, I'm here with Lou Barlow from Dinosaur Jr, Sebadoh, The Folk Implosion, and more. Hi Lou!

Lou: Hi

How are you?

Lou: I'm okay, you know?

You know, I just got off of PE so I'm feeling pretty good.

Lou: Okay [Chuckles]

I appreciate you getting up on this call at such an early hour.

Lou by Sara (February 20, 2026)

Lou: I'm– my children– I've already been up for several hours [Chuckles]. I've got kids, I took my nine year old to school, I woke up ate 5:00. Typical.

Um, so, you're mainly known as a bass player. But (and correct me if I'm wrong), you started playing music, like, writing songs on tape decks as a kid with your guitar, right?

Lou: Yeah.

So then how did you eventually pick up bass?

Lou: Um, I think I was in my senior year of highschool. And my first real band, Deep Wound with J Mascis (it was like a very fast hardcore punk rock band) we had just disbanded and I had– I was still in highschool and I had a friend who wanted– there was a guy I ate lunch with [Chuckles] who wanted to have a band, so me and my friend Scott (who also had played in Deep Wound) we decided to be his rhythym section. And I'm like "Well, I'll play bass." So, I played bass and Scott played drums. He actually was the bass player of Deep Wound, but he played drums. And then our friend Wayne (really funny guy, more into heavy metal than anything else) we formed a little band called "Wayne and the Wangs" and I played bass, and then we had one show, it was at the University of Massachusetts, in the sort of dining hall there. I think J came, I think? And J was at that point

formulating a new idea for a band that he was going to be the guitarist in. And, I don't know, shortly after that I just went back, J and I kinda resumed our musical relationship and I was the bass player for Dinosaur. But we weren't Dinosaur then, we were called "Mogo" at that point.

Um, and I read (this book came out a while ago) but I was reading in "Our Band Could Be Your Life" and also in the "Freakscene" documentary, one theme that came up a lot in you sticking with Dino in the eighties and then eventually coming back is, like, the importance and the quality of what J was doing as a writer and just the quality and output you were putting out as a unit. So, like, compared to Deep Wound and the other bands you are in and have been in, what about Dino specifically, like what quality, makes it resonate with you so much?

Lou: Um, well J is a genius. He's extremely gifted, and that was apparent when I first met him. He was a drummer in the first band we had, but he was a gifted drummer, and he was starting– he wrote songs for the band. And by the end (we started the band Deep Wound, I was one of the primary songwriters, I had some songs) but by the end J was just– had started to dominate the band and was writing great songs. You know, I didn't really have a problem with it, I was like "Hey, you know, he's great. Um, the songs are great, he has a cool look." [Chuckles] He's just, he was a real impressive figure, and he was six months older than me, but he was a year ahead of me in school. Uh, I don't know, I mean and then when he started writing songs for Dinosaur (or what became Dinosaur) the songs were astoundingly good. So I just, uh, I love bands, and I don't study much, I was never a student, I never went to college. Music is my passion and, you know, by the age of 18 and 19 I had listened to enough music and thought about it enough to understand that when you do have a chemistry or when you're in something like that that's so immediate to you, and the songs were so easy to remember, I knew there was something to that. I was like "Man, we're a band, we feel like a real band, and I feel like I'm in the The Ramones with this band, you know, I feel like we're doing something good." [Chuckles] and I just, at that point had understood that that was rare, you know? So...

Massachusetts in general, I mean, there's a big punk connection. Like The Stooges obviously, Iggy Pop, and I know your dad worked with Iggy Pop's mom, right?

Lou: In Michigan, yeah.

Oh yeah sorry, not Massachusetts. Michigan, yeah.

Lou: Well I moved from Michigan to Massachusetts when I was 12 years old.

So, considering the connection, and how associated it is with Michigan, like how did you first discover it?

Lou: What about... the music?

Punk, punk rock

Lou: I didn't really discover punk until I moved to Massachusetts. And the reason that it happened, I had a neighbor who had some sort of punk records. But then in Massachusetts there's a really high concentration of colleges, and especially where I lived. Like I could pick up, I mean like ten different college radio stations as a kid, you know. When I first moved to Massachusetts from Michigan, I loved radio, I just loved going down the dial on the radio and finding stations. And when I did that in Massachusetts, as I started from the left of the dial moving right, I heard the most incredible– I heard The Dead Kennedys on the radio in 1980? 1981? I think. And I, I just– I had been– I mean classic rock was a huge thing (they weren't even calling it "classic rock" at that point). But I had been through the seventies, and seventies pop radio (which I absolutely loved) and I loved The Beatles, but music also seemed sort of out of my reach because there were amazing things. I heard, you know, Jimi Hendrix and The Beatles and the standards were so high, and the musicianship was always so, um, I mean just incredible you know? Incredible music, musicianship, all of this stuff. It's like, I just– it didn't feel accessible to me. But when I heard punk rock, I was like "Oh, this is, this is something I could do." And I loved how it, I loved how punk rock really leaned into the noise of the guitar, you know, as opposed to like a lot of notes and things. It was just so immediate and exciting and I felt really drawn in by it, immediately.

think, I think honestly most people that I know– everyone that I know who has gotten into punk can pretty much say the same thing. Because I got through rock through The Beatles ('cause my family aren't totally music people) and I really dug it. But, you know, you think The Beatles, you think David Bowie, and you're like "Oh it's magical, it's like they're from another planet." And then you get into punk rock, and I remember discovering Discord specifically, because I–

Lou: Oh, okay.

(and I interviewed Ian last summer)–

Lou: Oh, cool.

And it was just like, it opened it up, because you realize "Oh, you can, like, do it." You can literally just do it, there are, like, no prerequisites.

Lou: Mhm, it's true. Yeah, I mean, I heard the very first– on a college radio station I heard The Teen Indles "7, because there was a member of one of the Discord bands that happened to be going to college in the area that I lived in, because there's a lot of these sort of upscale universities, and DC, the scene itself, there's a lot of– there was money there. Those kids had resources, I would say [Chuckles] and, but The Teen Idles record was the first Discord record and I happened to hear it on the radio and then I mail ordered it. So I was just caught up in

Discord as it was happening, and was just waiting for each release, and I would send cash in the mail and get these– get the first ten... or not ten, I don't know, maybe seven or eight Discord records through the mail, with a little note that said "Thanks, Ian." You know [Chuckles], so I was just lucky. My proximity to college radio, um, was just, it just blew my mind. And it brought me into all of it, you know?

And then, um, I was listening to your interview with Marc Maron last night. Which is from quite a while ago, but this part really resonated with me, I thought it was really cool. You were talking about you and Eric Gaffney, when you were kids, and you would go to Bible readings and things like that.

Lou: Yeah

And you mentioned, like, offhand– and you didn't really get into it, like, but you were saying, like, how the music that you were discovering together was part of the spiritual pursuit that you were on. Can you elaborote on that, if you remember?

Lou: Um, how can I elaborite on that? [Chuckles] it was a short blip of time, uh, I think. I don't know, hm, how do I elaborate on that? It's kind of a complicated, you know. I think, music seemed so powerful to me. And it seems like a real spiritual vehicle, you know. And there was also an aspect of psychadelics, you know. Like I was experimenting– I had taken acid for the first time, smoking weed, and um... I think my mind was just really, I was just really, I was kind of– I almost thought music could be this kind of gateway, you know? Like a portal could open up, because it felt that way when I heard The Beatles, when you heard certain Beatles songs, or you felt like... I don't know that music could just– somehow was connected to this great mysterious force. And I think for that brief period (and I still feel this way) but um, that brief period, I think Eric and I were kind of looking... I don't know what. Thinking about it now, I'm like "that's so crazy" [Laughs]. I mean, it's kind of cool, you know, that we were open–minded enough to think about these things, and to, um, but uh, yeah, that's tough for me to really encapsulate.

But I also think part of it is, I mean like... I live where I live, right? It's honestly– I'm gonna be honest, there's not a lot going on. It's kind of boring. And I remember when I discovered The Beatles for the first time when I got into rock 'n' roll, and it was just like, it opened these doors of what, I think, how the world and feelings can be articulated. And then the summer I was twelve I discovered– I got into Nirvana (and they're still my favorite band) and that opened me to punk rock (like Sonic Youth, you guys, The Stooges and whatever). And I still think– like when I listen to "In Utero" or, I don't know, any Beatles album or The Doors self-titled, you go somewhere else. You feel like you are... it's kind of like what Nick Cave said a while ago, like, "music can kind of like, transcend you beyond the context you're at currently."

Lou: Yeah. I mean, The Doors named themselves after... was it a book? "The Doors of Perception".

Yeah, "opening the doors of perception".

Lou: Yeah, and they definitely had that. They were just pushing the envelope, through the repition and the music and the, you know... them jamming, improvising, and Jim Morrison just being this, at that point, kind of like this free... he was just this conduit, he was kind of singing off the top of his head. Yeah that stuff is really– that was very– yeah, I think Eric and I both... I felt like "I can find my own way into that", you know? I don't just, just find a little doorway, find our own door [Chuckles].

Open your own door of perception.

Lou: Yeah, that was a really big part of my early, you know, sort of acoustic based... home recorded stuff was based on that.

I know you're a big fan of him, too. But I also feel that way about Daniel Johnston.

Lou: Oh god, [Chuckles], yeah and Daniel had a real Jesus, you know, fixation as well. He was, I mean, he had a devestating LSD trip, it blew his mind and really fucked with him. But he was so sensitive, but uh, oh yeah, the first time I heard Daniel Johnston was the very first Dinosaur Jr tour, and we were opening up for Sonic Youth, and I think it might of been the last night of this tour... but it was an incredible tour because they were my favorite band and I just loved them. And talking about what they did with guitar tunings and a lot of their– they were doing a song called "Express to Yr. Skull" I think at that point, it was kind of an early version of that, just this incredible experience to see it live. And we were outside, before the show, and we had a big boombox because they were always just aquiring music. They were always shopping for records and people were giving them cassettes, so they what they would do is play the cassettes people gave them. And they had just gotten this cassette– they had just gotten the early Daniel Johnston tapes, and I heard "I'm a Baby (In My Universe)" coming out of Sonic Youth's boombox, it was like twilight, you know? I'm looking at the sky and the stars and I'm hearing Daniel Johnston for the first time and it felt like a transmission, like this pure spiritual transmission. I was like, I was already working on my own things at that point, and it was familliar to me sonically because he was recording on portable tape recorders and I recognized the sound, but he was really doing it. I mean, to me I'm like "Oh my god!", that song in particular– you know the "Hi, How Are You" cassette is just– yeah... talk about doors opening. I mean he was doing it in his parents' basement and... and playing a chord organ. All this stuff was so familiar to me because I had very similar sounds and similar ideas, but to hear him do it I was like "Oh god, he's [Chuckles] he's doing that thing that we were trying to do.

But he, I mean, the incredible thing about him is... that the first time I heard him I was in like the eighth grade,

and I, um the incredible thing about Daniel Johnston is that I feel like people either get it or they don't. People who like Daniel Johnston either really, really love him or they just don't get it, you know? I was watching a documentary about him the other day and my mom came in (and she, you know, she listened to like Elliott Smith and the Sex Pistols, and that kind of stuff back in the day). And she's listening, trying to understand, and she's like "I just don't get it, I just don't get why everyone here is saying that he's so incredible." And I just don't know how to explain it, he just– there's an element of the human condition that I feel like he just articulates that no one else has.

Lou: I just think, in a really basic way, I think his songs are amazing. You know, as much as he could be... you can kind of pigeon hold him as being kind of a... what do you call it? Like a "outsider artist", as much as that is kind of pushed about him, he actually incredible songs with incredible lyrics and incredible melodies, and that's what gives him the staying power.

Yeah. And then... I mentioned before... Elliott Smith, and that reminded me (you know what's coming) but you knew him back in the day, right?

Lou: Yeah

You were friends with him, yeah. So how did you first meet him? What about his music did you like?

Lou: I had heard his second record, which is like the "Needle In The Hay" record, and that sounded extremely familiar to me. It sounded like things that I was doing at the time, but more articulated. Like he was a better player, he was tied to more of a folk and Beatles tradition. But that record, "The Needle In The Hay" record is a home-recorded record, and it's really great! And the songs are incredible, so when I heard that (that was when Sebadoh was kind of starting to peak, early 90's... '93, '94. And when we always chose bands we wanted to hear open for us. And I was like "I want Elliot Smith to open for Sebadoh, I wanna see this guy", and he did! And that's when I got to know him, and then it turned out that he spent a few years (this is kind of crazy), he spent a few years living in North Hampton– the North Hampton/Amherst area (which is where Dinosaur are from) and he actually went to Hampshire college at the same time that Sebadoh was playing our very first shows at Hampshire college, and Dinosaur Jr was also playing our very first shows at Hampshire college, and Elliott worked at my favorite supermarket at the time. I didn't even know that, I had no idea, I didn't find that out until like two years after when

©Elliott Smith: 'Pulling Pines' moonscape' moon of the world then I die' Vitamin Records

were just talking. 'Cause we had done this tour, he was traveling with his girlfriend at the time, Joanna. But there was a really long drive, she couldn't be there for it, so Elliot and I drove together from Phoenix to San Diego, which is like a 10-hour drive, and we just chatted the whole time. And I guess that's kind of where I entered, you know, kind of his sphere. I mean, I didn't see him regularly necessarily. But then we ended living a few streets away from each other in LA at the end of his life, and we were actually getting closer around the time that he passed away. But um, but yeah I loved the "Needle In The Hay" record. I guess it's self-titled, is it self-titled? [Laughs]

Yeah, it's self-titled.

Lou: Yeah, I loved that record. I mean, it's totally up my alley (as they say) because it's a home recorded record. There's a lot of downstroking strumming, which is familiar to me, and it could be something that I– there could be something that I stylistically imparted to him, you know, through that. Like my early... because I also heard (and I still can't believe this), but the very first Sebadoh show was a duo show Eric Gaffney and I played. I played my ukelele, Eric played stripped-down drums, and we did a show with Heatmiser, which was Elliott's band. And I still to this– people are like "Oh yeah, you did that show at Hampshire with Heatmiser" and I'm like, "What?". Like I still try to, like, figure that out. Like we were sharing space, not knowing each other, at such a, you know, like a formative period for both of us. Um, yeah. I mean, you know, I would, I would've loved to actually follow up with him about that. Because we never got around to that! We talked about all kinds of shit, but we never talked about the real– some of the crazy connections that we had in the mid-eighties.

"Needle In The Hay", that was like the first– ('cause this was through "The Royal Tenenbaums") how I first heard him, that was how I discovered Elliott Smith. And I still bounce around between which era is my favorite, but that will always be my favorite song, just because it's like the quintiseential... because the lofi, but it's still kind of a bit complex, and it has the very personal but universal lyrics to it.

Lou: Totally, totally. And it's really well recorded. I mean, it's lofi but it's very– it's a perfect capture. Let's put it that way.

I don't know if you know this, but he's like really, really, really really, really, really popular with kids my age.

Lou: Yeah [Laughs].

Yeah! Like I told my friends, I was like "I'm going to talk to Lou Barlow! I'm to talk to the bassist from Dinosaur Jr!" and they're like "What?", and I'm like "He knew Elliott Smith" and they're like "WHAT?!"

Lou: [Laughs] Yeah, I mean, the first time that he opened for us (for Sebadoh) he wasn't really known, and

people talked over him. He was playing solo and people just talked through his whole sets. And I would inevitably get up after when we would start our sets, and I'm like "What's wrong with you people? You're talking over him! He's a genius!" you know. It was a beautiful tour because I would watch him soundcheck every day and it would be, like, absolutely silent and I would just– it brought me to tears a couple of times, to just sit and listen to him soundcheck, just himself. But when I told him I'd be like "I can't believe– I hate how people talk over you when you're playing." and he's like "I like it." [Laughs]

[Laughs]

Lou: "I don't like feeling like I'm the center of attention, I just don't mind it." I'm like "Oh, okay. Well, I guess I won't pick fights with the audience after the you play." Because I was just insensed that no one was listening. But then, years later, he and I (when we lived in the same neighborhood), we played some shows together and he was not doing well. And he would play those shows and people would– it was incredibly quiet, you know, these very crowded bars and it would be just absolutely quiet. And it was something I was always a little jealous of. I was like "God," you know, because I could never quite get that kind of spell over people. And I was a little jealous of him doing that but the last time I saw him do it, when we did this small show at this bar and everyone was quiet, I had this realization. I was like, "We're listening because we don't know if we're going to hear him again." It was like a very heavy, like, I'm like "Oh my god." We're listening because we all– you could sense– 'cause he was in a very– at the end of his life it was a very precarious time and he was not doing well. So that just changed my heart. I felt bad that I'd even wasted any time feeling even a little bit jealous of Elliott Smith [Laughs]. I was like, "Hey." Now when I play shows people are much quieter when I play now. And now I almost get freaked out. I'm like, "Do they think I'm gonna– is this it?" [Laughs] "Is this the last time I'm going to play for anybody? Is that why they're listening?" But it's, uh, interesting.

So, yeah, so a lot of people my age obvioulsy really like him. But when I saw– I saw Dino last July (July 25th, last year) and I was surprised– I was like fully prepared, I was like "I'm gonna be the youngest person there." There's a lot of kids in the crowd! There was a kid behind me in a Stooges shirt and I'm like "Okay, I don't have an original personality, I guess."

Lou: [Laughs] I was, you know, it's a really good thing– I mean, it's happening a bit with my solo stuff as well. Like, I'm just seeing younger kids and I'm like, "Ah, thank god." [Laughs] Because you really are– I mean, the whole point I think (especially with what I do and the way that I was introduced to music) is that you're trying to pass something along, you know? It's not so much like "Look at me!", it's more that you feel part of a larger... I've talked to Mike Watt about it, he had a really beautifully articulate thing about it. Which was, um, you feel like you just want to be in the river with everybody, floating down the river, you know? It's like that river of sound, uh, and that river, that inspiration, you know? You just want to be a part of that, like the bigger picture. It's not like– and that's kind of something I took away from punk rock, and I think it was a big part of indie rock

too. And even someone like Kurt Cobain felt very passionately and very uncomfortable with the idea of himself being singled out, because he was adamant about making sure that people knew where his inspirations came from, and that he was just continuing this– I think we felt, a lot of us from that period who were introduced to music through punk rock, or we were empowered by it, felt that we were part of handing on this inspiration. So when kids come to the shows it's always cool to see. And I feel like, you know, we're inspiring them, you know? Creative things, creative pursuits, music can really help you, and maybe that's the spiritual thing that I've sort of tried to understand. But it– you do– it actually becomes part of your coping mechanism. It becomes part of what connects you to other people when you feel like you are not connected to anyone [laughs] in your immediate space. You can feel connected to people through music.

And I think when you're talking about passing on and inspiring the people coming after you, I think especially now... I think indie rock and punk rock feels extra... I want to say the tangibility of it feels more prevelent because– I like big bands (my first concert was the Foo Fighters and it was a great show and I had a great time), but now, its like... ticket prices are more expensive than they ever have been in a long time, and I think also with technology things become more abstracted and less physical, and that kind of just makes everything feel less immediate. And so then... I discover punk rock and I discover through Nirvana, you know, Dino and Sonic Youth and Hole and that kind of stuff, the Ramones... you realize that first of all "Oh, I don't have to spend $300 to see a band, I can go to the Dinosaur Jr show for $50", but also, you know, things can still be– something can matter without having to be reaching a million people, you know? It can just be my friends in my city.

Lou: Yeah. Oh totally, totally [Chuckles], yeah. I was not– when I was a kid, I was not into the "arenas" thing and all that, you know? The first show I actually saw was a local bill with like three new wave and punk bands in 1980, you know, who played this little [Chuckles], actually it was this little theater that showed adult films at night. But they had a Sunday matinea show and my parents dropped me off there and I saw like three bands that were all local. And it was just thrilling, you know? It was wonderful. I didn't see an arena show until (and this is not counting festival shows I played myself) but the first time that I went to an arena and saw a band was in 1999 and it was a Black Sabbath reunion. And that was the first time that I had ever– I had just– it never seemed attrative to me, and it still doesn't seem attractive to me [laughs]. I just don't– I mean I've had some cool moments, you know, with Dinosaur Jr. opening for Weezer– and some festival things are very similar to that of course, but yeah, I didn't– my whole beginnings of music and all my inspiration is based on very personal, small, small setting– you know, experiences with bands that– with my favorite bands, too. I saw Hüsker Dü play, there was maybe thirty of us watching Hüsker Dü, you know, and it was just– he stood right up front and they were are that time– to me they were the best band in the word... and they were the most important band in the world! You know, but I saw them in an incredibly intimate setting.

Another artist that (I mean, somewhat kind of has a connection to you)... I listen to mostly older music, but he's more contemporary; MJ Lenderman. I know you met him and (I think it was on your Substack, or something?)

where you're talking about how you really liked his music and it was inspiring you to write more stuff. How did you meet him?

Lou: He– the first time I heard him, Dinosaur did a series of shows playing an older record. Like, I think it was the "Where You Been" record, where we would play the whole record. And then at the end of– after we would do that we'd have guests come on stage and play old Dinosaur songs with us. And I had never heard MJ Lenderman. I was like "Who is this kid?", I had no idea. And he got up and he played the song "Raisans" with us, which is not and easy song to play, by any stretch of the imagination. Like, J's chordal structures and that stuff on the song itself is very– I mean, it's a brilliant song, and a lot of parts, you know? But MJ just got up front and just played the most perfect version of it, missing nothing. Which never– (no disrespect to any of the dozens of people we did that with) but to have someone stand up there and seem completely... at ease– Dinosaur Jr pushes so much sound and there's so much, for him to just stand in front of that and just play a note-for-note, kind of like a perfect version of "Raisans"? I was like "Who is this kid?", like "Oh my god!", uh, but I heard some of his more recent music and the songs are great, his lyrics are awesome, he really reminds of, like, when I first– when Pavement first came on the scene, you know. And it's pretty much like the "Slanted and Enchanted" record, where it was like "Oh wow", you know? Stephen Malkmus' lyrical sensibility was just so easy. There's a flow to it, and when I saw MJ play last year (he played actually in my town) at a festival and he was wonderful, it was like, just, really– there's such a– he seemed so relaxed, and it just really stuck me. And then I had a really great conversation with him after that about, like the, like the minutia– like just bands that I had no idea that he would have any idea about. Like these kidn of nineties Americana, early Americana bands (you know, when they first started calling music "Americana", sort of in the wake of Uncle Tupelo and Wilco and things like that). But he knew everything, he knew so much about music, he was so passionate about it. We had a wonderful little conversation about a couple of really obscure bands and he blew my mind with his knowledge of music. I guess I'm gonna again, like, this coming week because Dinosaur Jr are playing a Wilco festival in Mexico and MJ's gonna be there, so.

Lou and MJ (2025)

And one of the reasons I like, I like Dino and one of the reasons I like him is because– obviously there's a sensibility in the nineties that I think is coming back, like now of like "Oh I don't care, caring is the worst thing that you can do." And like–

Lou: [Laughs]

You know, I like Cameron Winter and I like those kinds of bands but I feel like they kind of push that vibe, which I just can't really dig. And I like his music [MJ Lenderman] because "Wristwatch" and "She's Leaving You" and, like, the whole "Manning Fireworks" album is, like, really, really personal.

Lou: Yeah. So you're saying like someone like Cameron Winter is more... that's more of a sensibility that they

don't care? Or what is– what do you mean?

Like, I don't know, like sincerity. Kind of an insincerity, more of, like, you know, like irony.

Lou: Oh I see, okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I was... yeah [Laughs]. I gravitated to highly personal things, that's what I took away from punk rock, was personal lyrics. Which seems odd to say because it was such a– most of it was delievered screaming and a lot of– but what I always took away from it was, like, like sincerity [Laughs] and seriousness.

I feel like though, I mean, I think on the surface you'd hear more quieter music and you'd think that's more vulnerable. But I feel like The Stooges or like, uh, Easy Action (who I saw open for you guys), I feel like is a lot more vulnerable because if you're going to go and stand up in front of people and scream about all the reasons why you're angry at everyone, I feel like that requires a lot more vulnerability.

Lou: Interesting, yeah. That's really–

Even like the first S.O.A EP (or the only S.O.A. EP, whatever).

Lou: [Laughs] Sure, yeah, you know Henry Rollins. I loved that stuff, that's what I took away from all that, was personal, personal stuff.

So, I'm trying to think of how to phrase the next question. But, like, do you feel like there's a difference when playing really loud electric music or when you're doing your solo tours acoustically? Is there a difference in, like, um, the level of personalness, I guess, to the music? Or is it just all the same, just in different vehicles?

Lou: Oh they're totally different, that's why I love doing both of them. I think with Dinosaur Jr, I feel it's really great for me because I feel, um, like no (it's not on one), I'm going to say some things that aren't really going to really make sense. But I'll say it anyway [laughs]. I feel like no one is watching me when I play with Dinosaur Jr. And, you know what I mean. There are of course, when I look out and when I make eye contact with people, there's always some– you know (because I was always the kid that was looking at the bass player, I was always looking at anybody but who the leader was, I was always watching all the people in the band). So I know there are definitely people who soak up but, I mean, J carries the weight of that band and I get to just rock, just purely rock, I just throw myself into it physically and those songs live in me. They just, like, I am so– I guess we started the conversation with this, but I do think J is– he has an extraordinary talent for melody. And I don't think I could be in a band– I couldn't be in a band where I played music that I didn't like and didn't connect to. It would be very difficult for me to play music that I didn't think was catchy, I have to be totally engaged. I'm not a hired hand guy. If I don't– it could be the biggest in the world, if I don't connect to the melodies, I can't do it. But with

Dinosaur it's just an absolutely full body, full brain experience. And when I'm doing it, I really, I honest to god feel like I'm in The Ramones, you know? I like, "wow", I'm in The Ramones, I'm in a really cool rock band, you know?" I feel like I really live that when I do it. I feel it taps into such a primal teenage energy in me and I feel kind of invulnerable. But when I play acoustic I'm completely vulnerable because I'm right there and, you know, I aim to communicate as much as possible, you know? And I aim to play those songs that every night, the best versions of those songs that I could possibly play. And that body of music that I draw from when I play acoustic, you know, myself is like it's like forty years deep of songs, you know. So I'm like, I'm pulling my life out and just putting it out there. And that's much more, uh, it takes me a show or to to really relax, because I feel, you know, but then when I do relax under that situation it's extraordinary. And then I feel like I'm really connecting, you know, like in a really personal way.

What you're saying about, like, in Dinosaur being kind of invisible and kind of like J is taking the burden... I kind of agree in the sense that obviously melodically, and like, the power of his guitar really takes up a lot. But at the same time, I almost felt like ('cause J is obviously really quite and Murph's behind the drums) so you're kind of like the most high energy person there, and you're doing like the most interaction with the crowd. So I almost felt like you're kind of like, I mean like, maybe J's technically like "the leader, quote unquote", but you're kind of like the pep guy cheering the band on, getting the crowd into the vibe.

Lou: [Laughs] True, I'm the cheer, it's true. It's totally– it's true, you know. And the connection that I have with Murph is really intense. Like I've, you know, I've played with plenty of other people, drummers and– but what, like, he and I have a connection as a rhythm section that I can't even explain how we play together. I– it's just something that happened between us when we were young, and we also– we had to really connect in a really direct way to stand our ground to this, you know, this epic wall of sound that J was throwing. We had to really lock in on each other and really connect. And he looks at me when we play, you know, like, he and I are constantly– we're connected. But any other band that I played with (and also when we've had other drummers play with us) they don't look at me, they look at J because he's the– Murph and I have this very strong... we lay the bedrock of it. So I know that it's an– [Lou's audio cuts out because of my school's horrible internet connection]. I do feel– there's a part of it, I do want to, like, fully embody how playful and, uh, dynamic J's songs are, you know.

And then... this is like totally, completely unrelated... but, like, obviously I'm a big fan of Dino and your music, but also... "Raw Impressions". The only podcast I think I watch regularly. It's really cool, why'd you start that?

Lou: Um... my wife and I, when we first got together she said, "Oh, we should do a podcast." Which was funny... (that was a long time ago, this is like over ten years ago), and at the same time I knew some people in LA, like some comedians who were doing podcasts who were urging me to do them. Like "You got to do a podcast and you got to do it now." But I was like, "Oh my god, that's so much work. I can't possibly do that." Because I'm like

"If I do a podcast I'm going to be micromanaging every fucking second of that podcast, and I'm going to be compelled to add a lot of things to it (like music)." I would make it my kind of radio show vibe. Um, so when my wife first suggested it I'm like, "I can't, I can't do that. We don't have time". I mean, we were going through this absolutely momentous change in our life. We were becoming connected and we had a child, and I had to children from my first marriage, and it was just this incredibly complicated time. But, uh, then about three years ago Ben Lee (of Ben Lee fame) said he was starting a podcast network and "Would I do a podcast?", and I'm like "yes", but it was just the right time and I'm like, "Yes, I'll do that." And then I got so– and it's been three years now, three full years and I really, I've put so much [Laughs] into it. Just learned so many songs and written songs for the podcast. I've like– I just love pulling out all of my old cassettes, I love using my four-track as flavor in it. I love using cassettes, I love using dead media, I love the whole– just trying to create this world onto itself, I love the way my wife speaks. I love how she– 'cause she's really actually very much a natural when it comes to talking and the flow that we have is really great. And... it's just, it's just been a really cool way for us to document our lives and for me to just document my little– how I think about music, you know. I feel like it's a place where I can just show the weird connections that I make. Like, I make a lot of connections– like my musical life isn't just, like, bands and music. It's also, like, TV commercials, television theme songs, you know, like, there's– and comedy. You know, like, I really love comedy. And, so, it's been a really, it's been really satisfying in that way. And it's very– it's kind of personal in that way [Laughs]. It's like, I don't even know. I'm like, it's so all over the place. And I don't really, I don't do– I don't repeat things like you should, probably, to have a successful podcast. And I don't really, like, I'm kind of all over the place. So, we don't, um, I think it's hard for us to really... attract people to the podcast or keep people, but– but thank you for saying that. [Laughs] Thank you for saying that you like it because we– it's been our passion for three years.

This is probably, like, a really weird comparison... but like, I'm really into really old late night (because I like the ritual of it and it's more kind of personal), and I feel like your show (like, especially when you have guests on like Bobby Bare Jr.) like, it kind of has, like, a Dick Cavett kind of vibe, which is probably not what you're going for.

Lou: Oh, that's cool. That's what– that stuff, it's a huge deal. Like I was really, uh– I loved talk shows when I was a kid. I mean, that was also some of the only ways you could hear, like, really cool music too. But, you know, like, when Johnny– John Lydon/Johnny Rotten, he was on– there was a late night talk show called "Tom Snyder" and [Laughs] Johnny Rotten, when he formed PIL he did an interview where he– he was such an asshole. It was, like, incredible, just blew my mind, it just blew everybody. But [Lou's audio cuts out again] real touchstone for American– you know, people of my vintage was seeing someone, you know, seeing Johnny Rotten on talk shows and just, and just laughed. He just, you know, just people that broke through the wall basically. Just somehow broke beyond show business, spoke the truth, you know. I mean, yeah, there was always– yeah, those late night shows (oh my god), commercials, you know... skit shows like Saturday Night Live and SCTV, and David Letterman was a huge deal. David Letterman was a huge deal to us.

I love Letterman.

Lou: And he had cool bands!

Yeah! Sonic Youth, Beastie Boys, Iggy Pop.

Lou: Yeah. He had R.E.M. on their first record, he had them come on when their first two records came out. They made their first, like, they were so good [Laughs]. Like R.E.M.'s first appearance on David Letterman is incredible. I mean, it's a huge– it's kind of a huge indie rock moment, really.

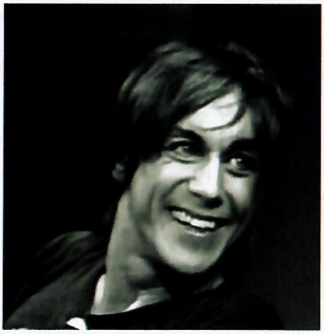
Have you seen, um, the episode (I mean, it's iconic)– the one with Iggy Pop and he has, like, the blue eyeshadow and he's talking about living in a trailer as a kid?

Lou: No [Laughs].

It's on YouTube! It's incredible. He also had, um, [Sighs] uh... I can't believe I'm forgetting their name. What was the band that did "Trout Mask Replica"?

Lou: Oh, Captain Beefheart.

Yeah, yeah. He had Captain Beefheart on!



Iggy on Letterman (1982)

Lou: Oh, yeah. Yeah, and like anytime Captain Beefheart was on TV was a huge deal. He did on Saturday Night Live thing that, like... I mean, actually Saturday Night Live's musical– like when they had the B-52s on, DEVO... oh god, Devo on Saturday Night Live in 1978... I think? It just– it just scared so much as a kid [Laughs]. I was like eleven, I think I was ten or eleven when I saw it and I'm like– it just, it scared me. There was just no– it was one of the most frightening, uh, provocative, transfixing things I've ever, ever seen, you know. It's just incredible. And then Captain Beefheart (oh my god), I can't– that's just when someone just literally takes the world and turns it upside down. You're like, "What?", yeah.

Well Devo– I was going to say, like, we both know they're an Ohio band, and I'm from Ohio, and I feel like DEVO... they just have a real Ohio sensibility, Midwest sensibiity. Which I feel like is weird to say, but...

Lou: Where are you from in– you're from Ohio?

Yeah, Columbus. My dad's side of the family are originally from Palestine but then they, uh, came to Ohio.

Lou: Wow. Yeah, my mom was born in Columbus, I was born in Dayton. Both sides of my family are, like, are

totally embedded in Ohio. Like I moved to Michigain from– my dad was the first person to move outside of Ohio in his family, we moved to Michigan. Very, very Ohio [Laughs], a lot of Ohio in me.

My friend– one of my best friends (who also came to the same Dino show as me last summer) she's going– she's really into the local music scene there and Ohio right now is having a real moment with hardcore.

Lou: Is it?

Yeah

Lou: Oh wow, cool.

Um... we're about to reach the one hour mark, and Google Meets has a one hour limit, but it was really, really cool talking to you. And, uh, just thanks for making time to be here, it was really awesome.

Lou: No worries. Well, thanks for talking to me, too

Well, hopefully we'll see you later, bye!

Lou: Yeah, see you...

Happy 59th, Kurt

February 20, 2026

Today is Kurt Cobain's 59th birthday. For me personally, it's a day to reflect; to think about the importance of music, how it has changed me, and what it has given to me. Nirvana are my favorite band, they have been since the summer I was 12 years old, and they have fundamentally changed me as a person; they were my introduction to punk, and it was through them that I discovered many of my favorite bands. Honestly, without them, I don't really know what I would be doing right now. My understanding of DIY and punk rock started with them, I don't think this zine would even exist if it wasn't for that summer.

I think too much of the conversation around Kurt is centered around his death. To an extent, I myself am guilty of this as well, dwelling over the question of "what could've been" if he was still here. What comic strips, paintings, sculptures, albums, and songs have we missed out on? Nirvana ended while they were still just beginning (in my eyes, it was only until their last record that they were able to find their sound; blending the noise of Sonic Youth and The Stooges with sweet Beatles-esque melody and Leonard Cohen lyricism, but that topic is a whole other article to write.) But this is a fruitless endeavor, we'll never really know what was to-be.

Ultimately, I want to take this time to celebrate the works Kurt created while he was still here, and the gifts his art has given us. I considered writing my own piece to celebrate, but I don't think I'd do the topic justice. Instead, I'd like to feature Jim Carroll's poem "8 Fragments for Kurt Cobain" (as read on "MTV's Spoken Word Unplugged"). While imperfect, it does more than I could.

1/

Genius is not a generous thing
In return it charges more interest than any amount of royalties can cover
And it resents fame
With bitter vengeance

Pills and powdres only placate it awhile
Then it puts you in a place where the planet's poles reverse
Where the currents of electricity shift

Your Body becomes a magnet and pulls to it despair and rotten teeth,
Cheese whiz and guns

Whose triggers are shaped tenderly into a false lust
In timeless illusion

2/

The guitar claws kept tightening, I guess on your heart stem.
The loops of feedback and distortion, threaded right through
Lucifer's wisdom teeth, and never stopped their reverbrating
In your mind

And from the stage
All the faces out front seemed so hungry
With an unbearably wholesome misunderstanding

From where they sat, you seemed so far up there
High and live and diving

And instead you were swamp crawling
Down, deeper
Until you tasted the Earth's own blood
And chatted with the Buzzing-eyed insects that heroin breeds

3/
You should have talked more with the monkey
He's always willing to negotiate
I'm still paying him off...
The greater the money and fame
The slower the Pendulum of fortune swings

Your will could have sped it up...
But you left that in a plane
Because it wouldn't pass customs and immigration

4/
Here's synchronicity for you:

Your music's tape was inside my walkman
When my best friend from summer camp
Called with the news about you

I listened them...
It was all there!
Your music kept cutting deeper and deeper valleys of sound
Less and less light
Until you hit solid rock

The drill bit broke
and the valley became
A thin crevice, impassible in time,
As time itself stopped.

And the walls became cages of brilliant notes
Pressing in...
Pressure
That's how diamonds are made
And that's WHERE it sometimes all collapses
Down in on you

5/

Then I translated your muttered lyrics
And the phrases were curious:
Like "incognito libido"
And "Chalk Skin Bending"

The words kept getting smaller and smaller
Until
Separated from their music
Each letter spilled out into a cartridge
Which fit only in the barrel of a gun

6/

And you shoved the barrel in as far as possible
Because that's where the pain came from
That's where the demons were digging

The world outside was blank
Its every cause was just a continuation
Of another unsolved effect

I think the role that the artist plays in their culture is very important. They show and prove to the world that there is value in doing something for the sake of doing, for the sake of enjoyment. That's what Kurt, Jim Morrison, David Lynch, Iggy Pop, Patti Smith, and every other artist who's work I enjoy has proved to me. There is a lot of romanticism around artists prematurely passing. But to me, it's a great tragedy. The artists relies on those who came before them. When all the artists before you have passed, who you do you lean on? Who guides you? It's hard to figure out how to grow up as an artist when the artists before you, the artists who are you examples, didn't have the chance.

I wish I got to see "Old Man Kurt", I wish the world could've witnessed Jim Morrison's sincerity push back against the attitude of the Reagan-Eighties. I wish Elliott Smith was still here, goddamnit! But ultimately, I feel grateful that I am alive in a context that allows me to engage with the works they've left behind. I feel grateful that I can spin The Doors self-titled or "In Utero" and have access to a different and conscious-expanding world. Music has taught me so much, it has showed me the possibilities life holds, it has showed me that I can create the world I want to live in.
As we navigate the strange times we live in, and the bizarre nature of what it means to be alive, this is what I hold onto most. As long as there are guitars, drums, and enough angry kids running on pure willpower, we'll make it (even if it is only by the skin of our teeth).

This is what Kurt has taught me, this is what today means to me.

Kurt by my friend Sara (February 20, 2026)

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